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From: "Shoren Brown, Trout Unlimited" <sbrown@tu.org>
Sent: Fri 5/18/2012 8:00:32 PM
Subject: Sportsmen Applaud EPA's Assessment of Bristol Bay, Alaska

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Sportsmen applaud EPA's assessment of Bristol Bay, Alaska;

Call on President Obama for swift action to protect fishery, jobs, and economy

Washington, D.C. - Hunting and fishing groups across the country voiced support for the Environmental Protection Agency's comprehensive, scientific assessment of Bristol Bay. The 339-page assessment recognizes Bristol Bay as a singular, unmatched global fishery for sockeye salmon and highlights the imminent threats from the proposed Pebble mine.

"Sportsmen and women thank the EPA. This report makes clear what hunters and anglers, thousands of outdoor-related industries, commercial fishermen, jewelers, and people from Alaska already knew: Bristol Bay is the most important fishery on the planet," said Chris Wood, President and CEO of Trout Unlimited. "Now it's time for President Obama to stand up for sportsmen and protect this fishery and the 14,000 American jobs it supports and the \$500 million in annual economic revenues it generates."

The assessment also concludes that:

Bristol Bay's wild salmon fishery and other natural resources provide at least 14,000 full and part-time jobs and is valued at about \$480 million annually.

The average annual run of sockeye salmon is about 37.5 million fish.

Even at its minimum size, mining the Pebble deposit would eliminate or block 55 to 87 miles of salmon streams and at least 2500 acres of wetlands – key habitat for sockeye and other fishes.

EPA evaluated four types of large-scale mine failures, and found that even though precise estimates of failure probabilities cannot be made, evidence from other large mines suggest that "at least one or more accidents of failures could occur, potentially resulting in immediate, severe impacts on salmon and detrimental, long-term impacts on salmon habitat."

Sportsmen are united in their support for the EPA to use its power under the Clean Water Act's section 404(c) to protect Bristol Bay from the proposed Pebble Mine, which, if permitted, would become North America's largest open-pit mine and produce up to 10 billion tons of toxic mine waste that must be treated and stored in perpetuity.

"Bristol Bay is exactly the kind of place that Theodore Roosevelt was talking about when he said it's our responsibility to conserve great habitat and wildlife," said Whit Fosburgh, President and CEO of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership.

"Protecting Bristol Bay is a bipartisan issue, with deep and broad support."

A recent poll of sportsmen in 13 battleground election states found that two-thirds of hunters and anglers support EPA action that places restrictions on the permits necessary to build the proposed Pebble Mine, which would be 20 times larger than all of the mines in Alaska combined. The sportsmen polled leaned conservative or Republican more than 2-to-1 over Democrats, 41% to 17%. Thirty-six percent identified themselves as independents.

Sportsmen overwhelmingly support proactive, commonsense restrictions that allow responsible development in the region and also protect the fisheries and natural resources of Bristol Bay.

"The EPA is taking the right steps with its comprehensive assessment of Bristol Bay. This deliberate and careful action will lead to an objective decision that conserves the fishery and related resources of the Bristol Bay region," said Gordon Robertson, vice president of the American Sportfishing Association. "The sportfishing industry and anglers strongly support the EPA's actions to protect Bristol Bay."

More than 500 hunting and angling groups across the country sent a letter to EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson asking the agency "to proactively fulfill its mission to protect the environment and human health in Bristol Bay, AK by using its authority under Clean Water Act Section 404(c) to withdraw waters and wetlands in the headwaters of the Bristol Bay watershed from future specification as disposal sites for dredge and fill activity associated with mining operations."

"We've invested deeply in conservation efforts in Southwest Alaska and our members treasure the Bristol Bay region's excellent big game hunting and sport fishing. Because the risks are too great for fish, wildlife and wild places, we fully support EPA action to protect Bristol Bay from inappropriate mining," said Dr. Richard Allen, past president of the Dallas Safari Club and the Dallas Ecological Foundation.

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